

Remarks

This response and accompanying Petition for Extension of Time, and Request for Continued Examination, are responsive to the Final Office Action mailed October 3, 2002 ("the Office Action"). In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 80-122, and objected to claims 110, 111, and 120. By this amendment, and without introducing new matter, Applicants have amended claims 97-113, and 115-122. Claims 80-122 are pending.

I. Claim Objections

The Examiner renumbered Claims 98-124 to 97-122, as indicated in the Office Action. The Examiner indicated that the dependency for each renumbered claim had also been changed, except that renumbered claims 110, 111, and 120 depended from cancelled claims and dependency was unclear. In accordance with the Revised Amendment Notice dated January 31, 2003, and for the sake of clarity regarding the renumbered claims and their respective dependency, Applicants submit claims 80-122 in their entirety with the amendments indicated for renumbered claims 97-122.

II. Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 80-122 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Buechel et al. (United States Patent No. 5,702,448) in view of Frushour (United States Patent No. 5,011,515). Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection cannot stand because Buechel et al. is an improper reference under 35 U.S.C. § 103. Buechel et al. was not available as prior art as of the effective filing date of the present application since the effective filing date of the present application (August 12, 1994) precedes that of Buechel et al. (July 5, 1995). Since Buechel et al. post dates Applicants' claim for

priority, Buechel et al. is not a proper § 102 reference. All rejections based on Buechel et al. should be withdrawn. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the § 103 rejection. Reconsideration is requested.

Conclusion

Applicants assert that pending claims 80-122 are allowable. Please grant any additional extension of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees (beyond the enclosed check) to our Deposit Account No. 50-0581.

Respectfully submitted this 3rd day of March 2003.



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